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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

FARM SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

SAFETY DIGEST

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U.S. Department of Agriculture
ACCIDENTS AND WARS

WASHINGTON, D. C.

January 1942

Sunday, December 7th, has come and gone. We are now in a declared war. It has been written in the record, broadcast over the air-waves, and printed in the newspapers. "United States is at war!"

Yet, we know of an "undeclared" war that has been raging year in and year out in this country since before our Revolutionary War. Each year a casualty list has existed. (Last year, the list was 96,500 dead; 9,100,000 injured!) We have had casualty lists like this not just two years out of twenty, for instance, but every year. No bands were played or drums beaten over these "war" victims, however. At most, perhaps a small story appeared in a local newspaper. For the dead we are talking about are the inhabitants of this nation who are killed by accidents each year. They died in our war of accidents, where everyone is a front-line soldier. And there are many fronts:

the home front, the highway front, the farm-front, the industrial front. We don't serve on just one front, but on all fronts all the time. Anyplace and everywhere are the battlefields.

Sometimes it seems to be a losing battle. When we stop to figure that every five and one-third minutes some person in this country loses his life through accident, then every minute looks pretty black. Then we know that in those same five and one-third minutes, 96 other people were injured, the outlook becomes even blacker. And then, the unhappiness created and the tears shed as a result of accidental deaths and injuries of loved ones--well, it's just about too much. We were almost ready to give up in despair of there being any light at all in such a gloomy situation.

But there is a spot of light even in this gloom and here it is: We have

but one common enemy to combat -- Carelessness. Carelessness is the cause of almost all accidents since but a very small percent can be called unavoidable. Conservative estimates are that over 90 percent of all accidents are preventable.

When a life and a home are destroyed because someone tried to start a fire in the kitchen stove by using kerosene, that's carelessness. When a man wears a loose flapping coat which becomes caught in a buzz-saw and he loses two fingers as a result -- that's carelessness.

By doing away with carelessness, and its attendants, ignorance (not knowing) and neglect (not doing), we can do away with almost all accidents.

We're working together to win against all enemies in our declared war. It's all of us, as individuals, declare war on accidents and win that war, too. We have the

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* HELP YOURSELF -- STOP ACCIDENTS *

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means, now let's make the effort. (From FSA Region VII Safety Bulletin)

MORE THAN A SLOGAN

"Help Defense--Stop Accidents!" is much more than a slogan.

Three decades of organized planning have just opened our eyes to the tremendous importance of Safety. It is true that many commendable accident prevention records have been made in industries, communities and states. Hundreds of thousands of lives have been saved--and we are proud of this.

But today we must think in terms of the complete conservation of man power. The accident that causes injury or death anywhere in our country, has a National disastrous significance.

In war it has often been said that the loss of one key man at some critical time has turned the tide of battle into overwhelming defeat. The same can be true, no less, in every one of our defense industries and other productive activities which are bending their whole energies today toward the security of the Nation. There are countless key men, and under their leadership countless groups of trained workers, all of whom are vitally essential in the vast defense machine.

These workers must be

protected so that they can labor in complete Safety. We cannot spare through accidental injury a single mechanic or truck driver, engineer or teacher, business man or public official, farmer or home maker. The security of the Nation lies in the Safety of its people. (From National Safety News)

NEAR ACCIDENTS

Like an argument, an accident involves more than one person. Some workers around the job boast that they don't care what happens to them, or whether they're killed now or die later. But they are not the only ones concerned.

In most cases, there are members of the family who would be grievously affected. But more directly involved are fellow workers who might suffer personal injury because of another's unsafe practice. An automobile can stop on the highway and be in no danger until another car happens along. Then both cars are in danger.

These near-accidents pack a wallop, as does every unsafe practice or condition. A bottle of poison can be harmless until consumed. An unsafe condition can be just as harmless, until someone gets in the way--crosses the broken walk,

stumbles over accumulated trash, knocks an arm across a protruding nail, or climbs up on a weak scaffold.

Best bet is to nip accidents and accident breeders in the bud. Stop even a doubtful case of unsafe practice and keep close check to dispense with all unsafe conditions. Study these near-accidents or what would be a near-accident to determine ways and means of prevention. The solution to the problem will serve as a top-notch accident preventive, and workers will be more safety conscious.

(From Cherokee Dam Safety Bulletin)

FOR SAFER DRIVING

Dangerous motoring conditions will prevail in northern latitudes during a goodly portion of the next three or four months. Driving practices will have to be amended accordingly, for it is a well-known fact that accidents go up when the mercury goes down.

In an effort to reduce mishaps, the National Safety Council has issued seven safety tips for winter driving. The list was drawn up by a committee of 32 engineers, public officials, transportation experts, and safety authorities. This group didn't reach its conclusions around a

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* A CHANCE TAKER IS *
* AN ACCIDENT MAKER *
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conference table. Instead, it went out on the frozen surface of Lake Cadillac, Michigan, last winter and studied the behavior of automobiles when driven under actual snow and ice conditions. More than 3,000 tests were conducted and nothing was taken for granted.

Despite the fact that there are fewer cars in use in the wintertime, traffic death rates go up from 35 to 45 percent in northern states and from 3 to 21 percent in southern states. Skidding is the greatest single cause of these accidents. Whereas it is involved in only one percent of the accidents on dry roads, it contributes to 27 percent of them on wet roads and to 50 percent on snow- or ice-covered roads. Poor visibility, attributable to increased hours of darkness, snow and sleet storms, and fog, is the second greatest cause of accidents. The tests proved some long-held pet theories to be unsound. For instance, the common practice of partially deflating tires on slippery roads was found to be bad. It was disclosed that very slight additional traction for stopping is gained and that there is a greater tendency towards side skidding when rounding curves.

Following are the seven suggestions of the committee: First, check brake linings for simultaneous gripping, as unequalized

brakes start skids. Second, use tire chains in heavy snows. Third, make sure that windshield wipers and defrosters are working properly and that lighting equipment is adequate for additional hours of darkness and for snow, fog, and sleet. Dim or depress headlights when passing cars. Fourth, travel at reduced speeds on snow or ice, even when using chains, and watch out for children on sleds. Although tire chains provide needed traction for stop-and-go travel on snow or ice, they do not make high speeds safe. Fifth, don't follow the car ahead too closely. Don't attempt to pass cars on hills or curves, and approach icy curves slowly, even when the road is sanded or when your tire chains are on. Sixth, slow down with the car in gear and "pump" brakes on-off-and-on to keep wheels from locking completely, especially when not safeguarded by chains. Seventh, exercise more caution generally, and open cowl ventilator to force out carbon monoxide gas, especially in the case of old cars. (From Compressed Air Magazine)

AND "THAT A DIME!"

"We were talking recently with a friend who seemed to have some delusions regarding the distance at various speeds in which he could stop his car.

"Why, my brakes are perfect," he said, "I can stop on a dime at fifty miles an hour."

He was completely shocked when informed that only a highly skilled driver, operating a mechanically perfect vehicle, could hope to bring his vehicle to a complete stop--from the time he received the impulse to apply his brakes--in less than 30 feet at 20 m.p.h.

Undoubtedly there are many drivers who will scoff at that statement. Nevertheless, out of more than 200 drivers tested in the Kansas City District, only three were able to stop their vehicles in less than 30 feet at 20 m.p.h. The average stopping distance (reaction and braking distance) was found to be 39.78 feet.

These facts are startling to the average driver. But even more startling is the fact that hundreds of lives are placed in jeopardy daily because the highways are full of drivers who think they can "stop on a dime." (From Kansas City U. S. Engineer's District Bulletin)

EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS

"It is our responsibility to tell others and to prove to others that safety pays; it is good business; it is good business for the pocket-

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* CAUTION MEANS PRECAUTION *

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book; it is good business for humanity; it saves time, money, and material. Everyone of those three elements is important in the National Defense.

"Everyone of the 130,000,000 persons in this great nation has to be willing to sacrifice whatever may be necessary for the good of the whole. However, that sacrifice must be intelligent sacrifice.

"We need production now more than anything else, and we cannot waste our manpower, our materials or time, and our money by unnecessary accidents, and that is where we end that is where safety comes in.

"We must teach and train safety so that our production for National Defense may never be hampered, but can on the contrary speed up." (From

Mobile U.S. Engineer's District Bulletin)

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

We've got a suggestion to make! The Safety Section in the past has given advice. We have been repeating the same things again and again--phrased differently, perhaps, but

in the end amounting to the same thing: "Take care of yourself", "Work cautiously", "Avoid known hazards", "Try to foresee and guard against the unknown", etc.

Why have we been saying these things and others over and over? To save you money! To save you agony! And to save your life! That's why we've been saying them over and over.

Now for the suggestion. We think you should help us. Turn about is fair play. We suggest that you give yourself some safety advice.

Think over the things that have happened to you or to your fellow workers in the past couple of months, and recall the lessons you may have learned from the accidents or near-accidents you observed.

Was it possible that the injury or near-injury might just as easily have happened to you as to the other fellow? You know, as well as we do, that all accidents don't happen to the other fellow. What would you have done if you were in the other man's shoes, in order to avoid getting hurt? That

would you have done to avoid the conditions which made the accident possible?

In all probability, you have the edge on him. He might never have seen an accident occur just like that, but now you have. If the same type of accident occurs to you, you won't have the excuse that he had.

It is admitted that one accident does not happen precisely in the same manner as the similar one preceding it, except in rare instances. But there is a sufficient similarity of conditions underlying certain types of accidents to make it possible to avoid the general set-up that creates the hazard. What general conditions do you recall that existed prior to some recent accident, and what would you do should the same conditions again exist?

Are you the type of person who learns from the mistakes of others? Or are you one of these thick-headed numbskulls who can't learn a thing unless it's pounded into his head with a sledge hammer or an accident to himself? (From Tulsa Oiler)

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* * DON'T DEPEND ON OTHERS * *
* LOOK TO YOUR OWN SAFETY * *
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